



Former aide to 2 New York governors is charged with being an agent of the Chinese government

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE
Associated Press

A former aide to two New York governors was charged Tuesday with acting as an illegal agent of the Chinese government who used her state positions to subtly advance Beijing's agenda in exchange for financial benefits worth millions of dollars. Linda Sun, who held numerous posts in New York state government, including deputy chief of staff for Gov. Kathy Hochul and deputy diversity officer for former Gov. Andrew Cuomo, was arrested Tuesday morning along with her husband, Chris Hu, at their \$4 million home on Long Island.



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Attorney Seth DuCharme walks in front of former New York Governor Kathy Hochul aide Linda Sun, second from right, and her husband, Christopher Hu, center, as they leave Brooklyn Federal Court after their arraignment, Tuesday, Sept. 3, 2024, in New York. Associated Press

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Former aide to 2 New York governors is charged with being an agent of the Chinese government

Continued from Front

Federal prosecutors said Sun, at the request of Chinese officials, blocked representatives of the Taiwanese government from having access to the governor's office and shaped New York governmental messaging to align with the priorities of the Chinese government, among other things.

In return, her husband got help for his business activities in China — a financial boost that prosecutors said allowed the couple to buy their multimillion-dollar property in Manhasset, New York, a condominium in Hawaii for \$1.9 million, and luxury cars including a 2024 Ferrari, the indictment says.

Sun also received smaller gifts, the indictment said, including tickets to performances by a visiting Chinese orchestra and ballet groups and "Nanjing-style salted ducks" that were prepared by the personal chef of a Chinese government official and delivered to Sun's parents' home in New York. If true, the allegations show that Chinese authorities were able to gain influence at the highest levels of state government in New York for nearly a decade.

"As alleged, while appearing to serve the people of New York as Deputy Chief of Staff within the New York State Executive Chamber, the defendant and her husband actually worked to further the interests of the Chinese government and the CCP," United States Attorney Breon Peace said, using the acronym for the Chinese Communist Party. "The illicit scheme enriched the defendant's family to



Former New York Governor Kathy Hochul aide Linda Sun, right, and her husband, Christopher Hu leave Brooklyn Federal Court after their arraignment, Tuesday, Sept. 3, 2024, in New York. Sun is charged with being an aide to the Chinese government.

Associated Press

the tune of millions of dollars." Sun and Hu pleaded not guilty during an initial court appearance on Tuesday afternoon in Brooklyn and will be released on bond. Sun has been barred from having any contact with the People's Republic of China's consulate and mission.

Her defense lawyer, Jarrod Schaeffer, said, "We're looking forward to addressing these charges in court. Our client is understandably upset that these charges have been brought."

The case is part of a broader Justice Department effort to root out secret agents for the Chinese government operating in the United States. In recent years, federal authorities have charged Chinese nationals not only with covertly advancing Beijing's interests but also with harassing and intimidating dissidents on the government's behalf. Last year, the Justice Department charged a pair of men with establishing a secret police station in New York City while acting under the direction and control of

the Chinese government. Sun, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in China, worked in state government for about 15 years, holding jobs in Cuomo's administration and eventually becoming Hochul's deputy chief of staff, according to her LinkedIn profile. In November 2022, Sun took a job at the New York Department of Labor, as deputy commissioner for strategic business development, but she left that job months later in March 2023, the profile said. In a statement, a spokesperson for Hochul's office said the administration fired Sun after "discovering evidence of misconduct."

"This individual was hired by the Executive Chamber more than a decade ago. We terminated her employment in March 2023 after discovering evidence of misconduct, immediately reported her actions to law enforcement and have assisted law enforcement throughout this process," the statement reads.

The indictment said that, among other things, Sun worked to ensure that rep-

resentatives of Taiwan's government couldn't get meetings with high-ranking New York state officials. The Chinese government considers Taiwan to be part of China.

It also outlined a series of exchanges Sun had with officials in the Chinese Consulate in New York in January 2021, when Cuomo was still governor and Hochul was lieutenant governor. Neither leader is named in the document, but are instead referred to as "Politician-1" and "Politician-2."

After Chinese officials requested a Lunar New Year video from the governor, Sun said Hochul could probably do it and asked for "talking points of things you want her to mention." "Mostly holiday wishes and hope for friendship and cooperation / Nothing too political," an official told her, according to the indictment.

Sun later told a different official that she had argued with Hochul's speechwriter over the draft, because the speechwriter insisted on mentioning the "Uyghur situ-

ation" in China. She promised that she wouldn't let that happen, and the final speech did not mention the Muslim ethnic minority, according to the indictment. Sun's alleged activities in New York paved the way for lucrative business deals for Hu in China, prosecutors said, including discussions about a venture to export frozen seafood to China. Hu then attempted to conceal the earnings through various methods in the U.S., according to the indictment. At the arraignment, Assistant U.S. Attorney Alexander Solomon said there were a "multitude of shell and business entities" used in the crimes, adding "This is no ordinary financial fraud."

The FBI searched the couple's multimillion home in Manhasset in late July but declined to release details at the time.

Sun is charged with violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act, money laundering and helping people commit visa fraud and enter the U.S. illegally. Hu is charged with money laundering conspiracy, conspiracy to commit bank fraud and misuse of means of identification. Neither has been charged with espionage.

Cuomo spokesperson Rich Azzopardi downplayed Sun's reach in the former governor's administration, saying she "worked in a handful of agencies and was one of many community liaisons who had little to no interaction with the governor."

Sun and Hu live in a gated community on Long Island called Stone Hill. The couple purchased the house in 2021 but placed it in a trust earlier this year, records show. □

China-linked 'Spamouflage' network mimics Americans online to sway US political debate

By DAVID KLEPPER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When he first emerged on social media, the user known as Harlan claimed to be a New Yorker and an Army veteran who supported Donald Trump for president. Harlan said he was 29, and his profile picture showed a smiling, handsome young man. A few months later, Harlan underwent a transformation. Now, he claimed to be 31 and from Florida.

New research into Chinese disinformation networks targeting American voters shows Harlan's claims were as fictitious as his profile picture, which analysts think was created using artificial intelligence. As voters prepare to cast their ballots this fall, China has been making its own plans, cultivating networks of fake social media users designed to mimic Americans. Whoever or wherever he really is, Harlan is a small part of a larger effort by U.S. adversaries to use social media to influence and upend America's political debate. The account was traced back to Spamouflage, a Chinese disinformation group, by analysts at Graphika, a New York-based firm that tracks online networks. Known to online researchers for several years, Spamouflage earned its moniker through its habit of spreading large amounts of seemingly unrelated content alongside disinformation.

"One of the world's largest covert online influence operations — an operation run by Chinese state actors — has become more aggressive in its efforts to infiltrate and to sway U.S. political conversations ahead of the election," Jack Stubbs, Graphika's chief intelligence officer, told The Associated Press.

Intelligence and national security officials have said that Russia, China and Iran have all mounted online influence operations targeting U.S. voters ahead of the November election. Russia remains the top threat, intelligence officials say, even as Iran has become more aggressive in recent months, covertly supporting U.S. pro-



A woman walks with her ballot to a vacant voting booth at City Hall in San Francisco, March 5, 2024.

Associated Press

tests against the war in Gaza and attempting to hack into the email systems of the two presidential candidates. China, however, has taken a more cautious, nuanced approach. Beijing sees little advantage in supporting one presidential candidate over the other, intelligence analysts say. Instead, China's disinformation efforts focus on campaign issues particularly important to Beijing such as American policy toward Taiwan while seeking to undermine confidence in elections, voting and the U.S. in general.

Officials have said it's a longer-term effort that will continue well past Election Day as China and other authoritarian nations try to use the internet to erode support for democracy.

Chinese Embassy spokesperson Liu Pengyu rejected Graphika's findings as full of "prejudice and malicious speculation" and said that "China has no intention and will not interfere" in the election.

X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, suspended several of the accounts linked to the Spamouflage network after questions were raised about their authenticity.

The company did not respond to questions about the reasons for the suspensions, or whether they were connected to Graphika's

report. "We will continue to remove deceptive accounts and harmful misinformation as we protect the integrity of our platform during the US elections," a TikTok spokesperson wrote in a statement emailed on Tuesday. Compared with armed conflict or economic sanctions, online influence operations can be a low-cost, low-risk means of flexing geopolitical power. Given the increasing reliance on digital communications, the use of online disinformation and fake information networks is only likely to increase, said Max Lesser, senior analyst for emerging threats at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a national security think tank in Washington. □

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Gun shops that sold weapons trafficked into Washington, DC, sued by nation's capital and Maryland

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Three gun shops that sold nearly three dozen firearms to a man who trafficked the weapons in and around Washington, D.C., are facing a new lawsuit jointly filed Tuesday by attorneys general for Maryland and the nation's capital.

At least nine of those guns have now been found at crime scene and or with people wanted on warrants for violent offenses, D.C. Attorney General Brian Schwalb said. Many of the others are still unaccounted for.

"Our city is being flooded with illegal weapons," he said. "All three of these stores ignored the red flags."

Washington, D.C., has struggled with gun violence in recent years. The nation's capital saw its highest number of homicides in more than three decades last year, and more than 90% of those were carried out with firearms, the suit states.

"Many of us watch the news and we wonder where all these guns are coming from," said Maryland Attorney General Anthony Brown.



Brian Schwalb, attorney general for the District of Columbia, center left, and Maryland Attorney General Anthony Brown, to his right, speak outside the federal courthouse, Tuesday, Sept. 3, 2024 in Washington.

"Now we have part of the answer."

In Washington, the supply of weapons is often fueled by people who buy guns for others who can't legally possess them, Schwalb said. About 95% of guns recovered in Washington, D.C., which has strict gun laws, originally come from nearby Maryland or Virginia, Schwalb said. While

some of those are stolen weapons, more come from illegal straw sales, according to data about firearm trafficking investigations from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

The suit seeks unspecified damages and court action to halt any future straw purchases.

The lawsuit is the first to be

filed jointly and comes as cities and states around the country file civil suits against gun shops, including in New Jersey, Minnesota, Chicago and Philadelphia. Kansas City also settled a suit last year against a gun dealer accused of ignoring evidence that guns were being sold illegally.

Licensed firearm dealers do work with ATF to identify

possible straw purchases, said Larry Keane, senior vice president at the National Shooting Sports Foundation, an industry group. Still, he said that warning signs may not always be obvious at busy stores, where a buyer might encounter different employees on different days.

"The focus should be on the actions of the criminal, not trying to scapegoat retailers who do their best every day to try to prevent straw purchasing," he said, pointing to a 2016 Justice Department survey of people in prison that found a relatively small number had gotten firearms from a retail source.

The new suit, filed with the gun safety group Everytown Law, accuses the Maryland-based stores of failing to respond to warning signs, including bulk purchasing and repetitive purchases.

The three stores sold a total of nearly three dozen similar weapons to Demetrius Minor over a seven-month period in 2021, the suit said. Nearly all were trafficked to others, including people who aren't legally allowed to buy firearms, the suit alleges. □

Commander of Navy warship relieved of duty months after backward rifle scope photo flap

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The commander of a Navy destroyer that's helping protect the San Diego-based aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt in the Middle East has been relieved of duty about four months after he was seen in a photo firing a rifle with a scope mounted backward.

The image brought the Navy considerable ridicule on social media. The San Diego Union-Tribune reported that Cameron Yaste, commanding officer of the destroyer USS John McCain, was removed on Friday.

The Navy said Yaste was relieved of duty "due to a loss of confidence in his ability to command the guided-

missile destroyer" that's currently deployed in the Gulf of Oman. The statement

didn't elaborate about why Yaste was replaced. In April, a photo posted



This undated photo, provided by Stars and Stripes, shows Cameron Yaste, commanding officer of the destroyer USS John McCain, firing a rifle with a backwards scope.

Associated Press

on the Navy's social media showed Yaste in a firing stance gripping the rifle with a backward scope.

The military news outlet Stars and Stripes reported that the Marine Corps took a dig at the Navy, sharing a photo on its social media of a Marine firing a weapon aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Boxer. The caption read: "Clear Sight Picture."

The post featuring Yaste was ultimately deleted. "Thank you for pointing out our rifle scope error in the previous post," the Navy later wrote on social media. "Picture has been removed until EMI (extra military instruction) is completed."

Yaste has been temporarily replaced by Capt. Allison Christy, deputy commodore of Destroyer Squadron 21, which is part of the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group that's also in the Gulf of Oman.

The Pentagon sent the carriers to the Middle East to be in position should Israel need help repelling an attack by Iran or other countries, if such a thing happens, military officials said. The Roosevelt is the flagship of a strike group that has recently included three Arleigh Burke-class destroyers, \$2 billion vessels that are designed to shield carriers from attacks by air, sea and land. □

A boat with dozens of migrants rips apart in the English Channel off France, killing 12

By **JOHN LEICESTER and MARK CARLSON**
Associated Press

BOULOGNE-SUR-MER, France (AP) — A boat carrying migrants ripped apart in the English Channel as they attempted to reach Britain from northern France on Tuesday, plunging dozens into the treacherous waterway and leaving 12 dead, authorities said.

Most of the victims were believed to be women, some under 18, and many of the passengers didn't have life preservers, officials said, with one calling it the deadliest migrant accident in the channel this year.

"Unfortunately, the bottom of the boat ripped open," said Olivier Barbarin, mayor of Le Portel near Boulogne-sur-Mer, where a first aid post was set up to treat victims. "If people don't know how to swim in the agitated waters ... it can go very quickly."

Europe's increasingly strict asylum rules, growing xenophobia and hostile treatment of migrants have been pushing them north. Before Tuesday's accident, at least 30



In this grab taken from video provided by BFM Littoral, emergency services at the port of Boulogne-sur-Mer, France, Tuesday, Sept. 3, 2024, after a boat thought to be carrying migrants ripped apart attempting to cross the English Channel.

migrants had died or gone missing while trying to cross to the U.K. this year, according to the International Organization for Migration.

Rescuers pulled a total of 65 people from the English Channel on Tuesday in a search that lasted more than four hours, according to Lt. Etienne Baggio, a spokesman for the French agency that oversees the stretch of sea where the boat ripped

apart. Doctors confirmed 12 died, he said.

Another 12 people were hospitalized, and two were in very serious conditions, authorities said.

Baggio called it the deadliest migrant boat tragedy in the English Channel this year. In July, four migrants died while attempting the crossing on an inflatable boat that capsized and punctured. Five others, including a child,

died in another attempt in April. And five dead were recovered from the seas or found washed up along a beach after a migrant boat ran into difficulties in the dark and winter cold of January. Many of those aboard the vessel that broke up in the English Channel on Tuesday didn't have life vests, Baggio said. It was not immediately clear what kind of boat it was. Three helicopters, a

plane, two fishing boats and more than six other vessels were involved in the rescue operation. In another sea tragedy Tuesday involving migrants seeking a better life in Europe, a boat carrying migrants capsized off the Libyan coast, leaving one person dead and 22 missing, Libyan authorities said. The agency overseeing the rescue operation in the English Channel said the boat got into difficulty off Gris-Nez point between Boulogne-sur-Mer and the port of Calais further north. Sea temperatures off northern France were around 20 degrees C, or about 68 F.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin went to Boulogne-sur-Mer to meet those involved in handling what he described as the "terrible shipwreck." He said the boat was frail and small -- less than 7 meters (23 feet) long -- and that smugglers are packing more and more people aboard such vessels. Most of the people on the boat were believed to be from Eritrea, and most of the victims were women, he said. □

Associated Press

Mexican demonstrators block Congress over proposals to make judges stand for election

By **MEGAN JANETSKY**
Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Protesters in Mexico City blocked entrances to Congress Tuesday over proposals that would make judges stand for election.

A mix of court employees, students and other critics chanted and strung ropes across entrances to the lower house of Congress.

Many employees, including those at the Supreme Court, have gone on strike to protest constitutional reforms proposed by President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's Morena party that they say would politicize and de-professionalize the court system.

Under the current system, judges and court secretaries, who act as judges' assistants, slowly qualify for higher positions based on their record.

But under the proposed changes, any lawyer with minimal qualifications could run, with some candidacies decided by drawing names from a hat.

The government claims courts are corrupt, while critics say it is a power grab by the president and a blow to judicial independence.

The ruling Morena party has the two-thirds majority in Congress needed to approve the reforms. The party's congressional leader, Rep. Ricardo Monreal, said the vote would go ahead, but perhaps not at the official Congress building.

Monreal said there were no plans to abandon the reforms, and said legislators might be called to session at a hotel or convention center farther from the city center. "This reform is going ahead," Monreal said in a taped

statement. He asked legislators not to try to force their way into Congress headquarters, saying "we don't want to provoke any incidents."

One of the protesters, Javier Reyes, a 37-year-old federal court worker, pledged to remain at Congress for as long as it takes.

"The party with the majority could take control of the judicial branch, and that would practically be the end of democracy," Reyes said. Mexico's courts have long been plagued by corruption and opacity, but in the last 15 years they have been subject to reforms to make them more open and accountable, including changing many closed-door, paper-based trials for a more open, oral-argument format. Voices both at home and

abroad say the new changes could mark a setback in the effort to clean up courts. However, the changes also include a time limit for judges to rule on many cases to combat a tendency for some trials to stretch out over decades.

López Obrador said last week he has put relations with the United States and Canadian embassies "on pause" after the two countries voiced concerns over the proposed judicial overhaul. □



Protesters block entrances to Congress over constitutional reform proposals that would make judges stand for election in Mexico City, Tuesday, Sept. 3, 2024.

Associated Press

Salvagers abandon effort to tow burning oil tanker in Red Sea targeted by Yemen's Houthi rebels

By JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press
DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Salvagers abandoned an initial effort to tow away a burning oil tanker in the Red Sea targeted by Yemen's Houthi rebels as it "was not safe to proceed," a European Union naval mission said Tuesday, leaving the Sounion stranded and its 1 million barrels of oil at risk of spilling.

While a major spill has yet to occur, the incident threatens to become one of the worst yet in the Iranian-backed rebels' campaign that has disrupted the \$1 trillion in goods that pass through the Red Sea each year over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. It also has halted some aid shipments to conflict-ravaged Sudan and Yemen.

"The private companies responsible for the salvage operation have concluded that the conditions were not met to conduct the towing operation and that it was not safe to proceed," the EU's Operation Aspides mission said, without elaborating. "Alternative solutions are now being ex-



This frame grab from video released by the Ansar Allah Media Office, the media arm of Yemen's Houthi rebels, on Thursday, Aug. 29, 2024, shows explosions striking the Greek-flagged oil tanker Sounion in the Red Sea after Yemen's Houthi rebels boarded and set explosives on the tanker, which was earlier abandoned after the Houthis repeatedly attacked it, setting off blasts that put the Red Sea at risk of a major oil spill.

plored by the private companies."

The EU mission did not respond to questions from The Associated Press about the announcement. The safety issue could be the fire burning aboard the vessel. Satellite images from Planet Labs PBC taken Tuesday afternoon and analyzed by the AP showed the Sounion still ablaze.

The U.S. State Department has warned a spill from the Sounion could be "four times the size of the Exxon Valdez disaster" in 1989 off Alaska.

Meanwhile, there's the threat of attacks by the Houthis, who on Monday targeted two other oil tankers traveling through the Red Sea. The Houthis have suggested they'll allow a

salvage operation to take place, but critics say the rebels have used the threat of an environmental disaster previously involving another oil tanker off Yemen to extract concessions from the international community.

The Houthis initially attacked the Greek-flagged Sounion tanker on Aug. 21 with small arms fire, projec-

tiles and a drone boat. A French destroyer operating as part of Operation Aspides rescued its crew of 25 Filipinos and Russians, as well as four private security personnel, after they abandoned the vessel and took them to nearby Djibouti.

Last week, the Houthis released footage showing they planted explosives on board the Sounion and ignited them in a propaganda video, something the rebels have done before in their campaign.

The Houthis have targeted more than 80 merchant vessels with missiles and drones since the war in Gaza started in October. They seized one vessel and sank two in the campaign that has also killed four sailors. Other missiles and drones have either been intercepted by a U.S.-led coalition in the Red Sea or failed to reach their targets, which have included Western military vessels as well.

The rebels maintain that they target ships linked to Israel, the U.S. or the U.K. to force an end to Israel's campaign against Hamas in Gaza. □

Associated Press

Clearview AI fined \$33.7 million by Dutch data protection watchdog over 'illegal database' of faces

By MIKE CORDER
Associated Press
THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The Dutch data protection watchdog on

Tuesday issued facial recognition startup Clearview AI with a fine of 30.5 million euros (\$33.7 million) over its creation of what the agen-

cy called an "illegal database" of billion of photos of faces.

The Netherlands' Data Protection Agency, or DPA, also warned Dutch companies that using Clearview's services is also banned.

The data agency said that New York-based Clearview "has not objected to this decision and is therefore unable to appeal against the fine."

But in a statement emailed to The Associated Press, Clearview's chief legal officer, Jack Mulcaire, said that the decision is "unlawful, devoid of due process and is unenforceable."

The Dutch agency said that building the database and insufficiently informing people whose images appear

in the database amounted to serious breaches of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation, or GDPR.

"Facial recognition is a highly intrusive technology, that you cannot simply unleash on anyone in the world," DPA chairman Aleid Wolfsen said in a statement. "If there is a photo of you on the Internet and doesn't that apply to all of us? then you can end up in the database of Clearview and be tracked. This is not a doom scenario from a scary film. Nor is it something that could only be done in China," he said.

DPA said that if Clearview doesn't halt the breaches of the regulation, it faces noncompliance penalties

of up to 5.1 million euros (\$5.6 million) on top of the fine.

Mulcaire said in his statement that Clearview doesn't fall under EU data protection regulations.

"Clearview AI does not have a place of business in the Netherlands or the EU, it does not have any customers in the Netherlands or the EU, and does not undertake any activities that would otherwise mean it is subject to the GDPR," he said.

In June, Clearview reached a settlement in an Illinois lawsuit alleging its massive photographic collection of faces violated the subjects' privacy rights, a deal that attorneys estimate could be worth more than \$50 million. □



Hoan Ton-That, CEO of Clearview AI, demonstrates the company's facial recognition software using a photo of himself in New York on Tuesday, Feb. 22, 2022.

Associated Press



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This week marks 19 years since the collapse of the Natural Bridge

The Natural Bridge, located between the Bushiribana gold mine and Andicuri beach, was one of the most famous and most photographed attractions in Aruba before its sudden collapse on September 2, 2005.

The bridge, which was the largest of its kind in the Caribbean, was 7.6 meters high and 30 meters long. At the time, Minister of Tourism Edison Briesen stated

that the cause of the collapse was not immediately known. However, a crack on one side of the bridge had been noted several years earlier.

"It is a very sad day for Aruba and its tourism," Briesen said at the time. "A picture of the bridge appears on nearly every promotional flyer, and more tourists visit it than any other attraction."

Many locals and visitors

went to see what was left of what was once a national treasure. The bridge was a coral limestone formation, shaped by thousands of years of strong waves and wind. Hundreds of visitors and locals walked across it every year.

The good news is that Aruba has several other natural bridges, though some are difficult to reach, including a smaller one near the collapsed bridge. □



The Aruba Conservation Foundation continues to 'Turn the Tide'

As part of 'Turning the Tide', an EU RESEMBID-funded coral and mangrove restoration project for Aruba, the Aruba Conservation Foundation (ACF) is looking for volunteers to assist with restoring mangrove channels, specifically improving water flow in the open salinas of Spaans Lagoen.



Initial restoration began last year with the creation of silt traps at Rooi Lamoenchi, Rooi Taki, and Rooi Bringamosa. The project now continues to progress with the re-opening of mangrove channels.

Volunteer Event Details:

- Dates: Saturday, 14 September 2024 & Sunday, 15 September 2024
- Time: Morning, 6:00AM to 10:00AM / Afternoon, 3:30PM to 7:30PM

- Location: Rooi Bringamosa, Spaans Lagoen
- Included: Snacks and refreshments
- What to wear: Old, sun protective clothing / clothing that you don't mind getting dirty in. Keep in mind that you will be working in water / mud. (wear appropriate shoes such as old sneakers or boots)

Register here: <https://forms.office.com/r/pHkaWLch4Y>

This event is intended for individuals in optimal physical condition

who are comfortable working in warm temperatures and wet, muddy conditions. Please consider this when registering for this event.

A pre-briefing event will be organized to present the activity plan and timeline, the exact location, and detailed information on the working conditions, and additional guidance on what to wear and bring. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions. The pre-briefing date will be communicated in the confirmation email after registration. □

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Starting at Parke Nacional Arikok's Visitor Center, this hike will take you through Visitor Center, Miralamar, Jamanota, Masiduri, Rooi Taki and Spaans Lagoen (Bus transport from Spaans Lagoen back to the Visitor Center will be provided by ACF.)

Date: Sunday, September 8th, 2024
Time: 5:45 AM – 9:00 AM
Distance: 6.75 km/ 4.19 mi

Register here:
<https://forms.office.com/r/7U5YzJ6yN5>

Picture credit: ACF on Facebook.



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- 50 SMS Local and International
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When purchasing the bundle for the first time at one of our stores, the Tourist SIM card is FREE and is tailored for visitors staying a few weeks in Aruba.

For visitors staying longer on the island, SETAR offers a flexible Prepaid option that allows you to buy credit conveniently at any Tele-shop, gas station, minimarket, or supermarket. This prepaid credit

provides you the freedom to call anytime or choose from the different Prepaid bundles SETAR offers: Data Bundles: Stay connected with high-speed Internet and choose from various data options to suit your needs.

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Are you planning a trip to Aruba that blends business with leisure, or perhaps seeking a remote work setup? Whether you're coming to Aruba for business or to embrace a 'workcation,' SETAR has tailored solutions to ensure seamless and uninterrupted connectivity during your stay.

Stay productive while enjoying the beauty of Aruba. SETAR designed flexible plans and reliable services to cater to your needs, providing you with the connectivity required for work and play. Go to the TeleKiosk in the Arrival Hall of Aruba's Airport and ask for the Prepaid Wireless Home Internet for seamless connectivity. Enjoy the fastest Internet speeds with our Wireless Home Internet Prepaid

plans without worrying about additional charges and you can use it anywhere on the island. It is easy to use and access. Choose the bundle that suits your budget and needs.

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- \$5.55

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- 50GB Data
- Valid for 7Day or upon depletion of your bundle
- \$20

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- 75GB Data
- Valid for 30Day or upon depletion of your bundle
- \$55.50

Imagine strolling along the Aruban beaches after a productive workday or unwinding with a picturesque sunset as your backdrop to a successful day's work. Experience the ideal blend of work and relaxation in Aruba, supported by SETAR's seamless connectivity. Let us make your stay in Aruba an experience like no other. □

Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at Divi Village Golf & Beach Resort!



The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba. The honorees were respectively honored with a certificate for their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honorary certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three levels of honor are as follows:

Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Goodwill Ambassador (20>years

consecutively visiting Aruba)
Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

The honorees were:

Goodwill Ambassadors
Mr. Mark & Judy Munden from Stephens City Virginia, United States.

Ms. Marouska Heyliger representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of Divi Village Golf & Beach Resort bestowed the certificate upon the honorees, presented them with gifts, and thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination, as their home away from home.

The top reasons for returning to

Aruba provided by the honorees were:

- "We first came to Aruba on our honeymoon in August 2004"
- "We absolutely fell in love with Aruba, and bought our timeshares on our honeymoon"
- "We've met great people that became our friends, and we hang out every year"
- "We even came during the pandemic"
- "Aruba is definitely our home away from home"

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honorees for their continued visits to the "One Happy Island". □

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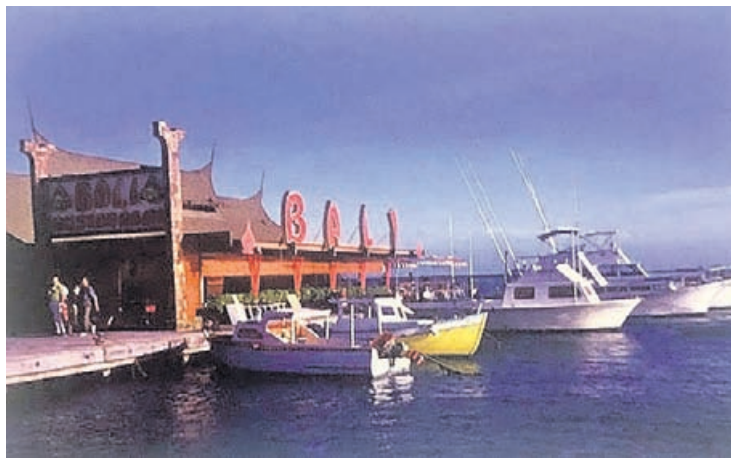
Auntie Anne's Pretzels | Aruba Aloe | Baskin-Robbins
Juan Valdez Café | Hungry Piranha - Pizza, Wings & More
The Brownstone Ribs and Seafood | The Market | M8 Boutique
Fusion - Piano & Wine Bar | Shalom Body & Soul Spa | Treasure Cove
Magnet Perfume Jewelry & Cosmetics | The Lazy Lizard
Shalom Hair & Nails Bar | Twist of Flavors | Dunkin' Donuts
Coming Soon: Moments & Memories Jewelry,
and El Patio Tacos & Tequila

The Bali Restaurant: a touristic hot spot and lost gem on the island

(Oranjestad)—Once located in what is now the Renaissance Marina, the Bali Restaurant was once both a touristic and local hot spot, and nowadays it's considered a forgotten gem on the island.

Known as "the floating restaurant", Bali first opened in 1955 by Willem "Bill" Strijland, who had experience in Javanese cuisine. At the time, the restaurant was pretty exclusive—with space to host only 25 guests. Yet, 4 years later, it was named the best restaurant in the Caribbean by the Caribbean Tourist Association.

The restaurant was probably most iconic for its Javanese-inspired exterior with its pointy, slanted roofs. However, the first version of Bali did not look like that at all but was still considered as one of the most popular restaurants on the island at



the time. The restaurant saw three different owners during its existence, during which it underwent various renovations and rebranding.

In 1964, the restaurant was taken over by Karel "Carl" Schmand. Over the years, the restaurant needed constant renovation and repair, mainly due to its vulnerability to leaks and the unstable pillars underneath the foundation. However, the biggest change made

to the restaurant happened in the year 1970—still under the ownership of Schmand, when it got its iconic pointy roofs. The restaurant was also expanded to host a total of 85 guests. This was "The New Bali", who had its official (re) opening in 1972.

After 1972, when Ronny Schmand took over, the restaurant saw yet another expansion; this time complete with a long bar and dance floor, where guests enjoyed live music from legendary



Aruban musician and composer, Toti Arends.

After 1989, the restaurant was again handed over to other owners, and since then suffered from unstable pillars underneath the foundation, resulting in various leaks and overflowing of water into the restaurant. And as most great things come to an end, so did the survival and maintenance of the Bali Restaurant. However, folks today still reminisce its legacy, and it's now considered a lost monu-

ment.

Be apart of the conversation: if you or any family member of yours have a memory of the Bali restaurant, whether it be a picture or just a story, share it with us! We would love to see this legendary hot spot through the lens of our visitors! □

Source and pictures credit to:
"De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over de geschiedenis van Aruba)" by Evert Bongers.

Enjoy one of the best views on Aruba at the top of the Hooiberg Hill



(Oranjestad)—If you are a regular hiker, or maybe want to spice up your morning work out session, then you might enjoy one of the most popular climbing sites on the island: The Hooiberg Hill. Accompanied with a 600-step staircase, this hill overlooks a great part of the island, the Caribbean sea, and sometimes even the Santa Anna mountain located in the coastal state of Falcon in Venezuela, providing one of the best views you can get on Aruba.

located at the center district of the island, Santa Cruz, the Hooiberg Hill is the second highest point on the island at 165 meters above sea level (or about 540 feet above sea



level). The highest point is Jamana Hill at 189 meters (620 feet), located in the Arikok National Park. The staircase that run on the side of the hill was first built in 1951, when Mr. Eduardo Tromp constructed it. At that time, the staircase consisted of 900 steps. Over time, as the steps faced erosion, the government decided to renovate these stairs in 1991. This new project delivered the newer staircase with

only 587 steps. However, don't be fooled—it may still be a work out to get on top. In addition, there is now a gazebo placed halfway up the stair for a little rest. The view at this resting stop is also a sight to see. The best time to climb the hill would be early in the morning or right before sunset, as it may not be as hot. However, the hill is of course open all day, every day. □



Article by Etnia Nativa

WhatsApp us 592 2702 and book your Aruban experience!
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“CURIOSO”, an ancestral wisdom

Episode CCLXIX - 269

Etnia Nativa is Aruba's unique native experience opportunity, where education is combined with entertainment. Share and interact with our exclusive team. Access this private facility and tour a beautiful property made with reused materials collected by its concept developer, our top columnist, avocational archaeologist, and island's cultural expert. Book a mind-opening encounter and dive deep into the navel of the island.

During this new weekly episode, Etnia Nativa elaborates on “curiosos,” the Papiamentu word that defines tribal healers. The name “Curioso,” means “curious,” is a “title,” which may have come from the inquisitive nature of those who practice the natural way of healing the soul with the assistance of spiritual powers and the magic of medicine plants.

A curioso is someone who adheres to the belief in ancient practices, also known as Shamanism. This belief is a practice that incorporates a range of customs, ceremonies, rituals, and traditions regarding communication with the spiritual world in which the curioso or curandero enters a supernatural realm to request assistance, particularly when needing to obtain solutions to problems affecting those in need of spiritual healing or physical ailments.

The curioso, or healer, uses appropriate words, objects, and potions in order to protect his patients from evil; his role is that of an opponent to all that is bad and as guardian of the good spirits. A curioso carries knowledge that has been gathered and passed through since prehistoric times from generation to generation, a connoisseur of plants, animals, and natural manifestations, a communicator, an educator, a prophet, and a mystic leader of his or her community.

In many native communities, the “curioso,” or medicine man, has an important role together with the head warrior or chief, which needs his power, making such a person one of the most powerful and influential men in the tribe.

The truth is that these “shamanic” or “curious” healing



practices are in many times combined with animistic beliefs applying totemism, amulets, and fetishism, as in the case of the Aruban “curiosos,” who adapted and incorporated Roman Catholic beliefs imposed by the Spanish colonizers in their practices of their native existence. Many items, such as crucifixes, rosaries, candles, and images or statues of saints, were incorporated to supplant their natural spirits entities and thus maintain basic traditions. The sun became Jesus; Mother Earth became Mary; and the saints were all the different nature spirits and entities. In the Amerindian Caribbean region, there are two types of these spiritual leaders, healers, guides, or “curiosos”: they are called “beyke” and “boitiu.”. Beykes are ceremonial leaders and teachers of groups. The beykes responsibility is to organize and lead group ceremonies that are necessary to maintain the balance and connection between the people and the Divine Consciousness of the Great Spirit. The goal is to learn and become an expert in the tradition so that he or she

can then teach and be a vehicle for the evolution and blossoming of the group.

Boitiu, on the other hand, is an explorer. The boitiu's job is to go into realms where not everyone can go. The boitiu does this through a technique called “journeying.” The journey takes the boitiu to places where she or he can gain spiritual power or wisdom and then bring it back to the community. These places are located in the spiritual realms that are identified as the “Three Cosmic Levels” of shamanic geography: the Upper World, the Middle World, and the Lower World. Some of the power that the boitiu brings back from the spirit realm is used to heal. The boitiu is what many know as a “shaman” or witch doctor since he or she uses mind-altering substances to travel to the spiritual world.

We must note that Shamanism is not a specific religion but a doctrine based on a belief that physical nature might be brought under the control of man in the person of “curioso,” who is believed to have a spiritual connection with animals, supernatural creatures, and all elements of nature.



If you liked our native stories and are interested in learning the true identity of Aruba, a visit to Etnia Nativa would be a fantastic choice. It has been a trend setter since 1994, as a co-founder of projects such as Arikok National Park, the Archaeological Museum, and the Artisan Foundation, among others. Every week, this newspaper continues to share its valuable knowledge. Don't miss the opportunity to feel the island's spirit through learning real stories that are not just remembered; they resonate, they're felt, and they stir souls. Book your visit: WhatsApp +297 592 2702 etnianativa03@gmail.com

In celebration of 200 years of the Aruban gold rush: Get to know the history of the gold industry on Aruba



(Oranjestad)—This year we celebrate a few milestone anniversaries on Aruba, one of them being the 200th anniversary of when gold was first discovered on the island. We have talked about the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruin before and its brief history during the gold industry on Aruba, but get to know a little more about the history of the “Aruban Gold Rush.”

The first hint of gold on Aruba actually dates back to 1725, when rumors about gold being found in dug up treasure chests of the Spanish colonial era prompted the first official exploration for gold on the island, commissioned by the Dutch West India Company. Under the leadership of Mr. Paulus Printz, a three-year search was conducted on Aruba, to no avail. Though they found some specks of gold, it was not enough to motivate a further search, and the assignment was discontinued by Printz himself. It wasn't until 100 years later, in 1824, when a young farmer boy named Willem Rasmijn found a lump of gold while out herding his father's sheep in the area of Rooi Fluit on the north coast. His father took it to a local merchant who then sold the lump for \$70. Unbeknownst to the boy and his father, they quite literally struck gold, and as word got out, a gold fever spread among the locals who started searching for more gold.

When the colonial governor in Curacao, Governor Cantz'laar, heard about the news, he sent his adjutant, Capitan van Raders, to start harvesting gold. This was in July 1824. In August of that same year, the governor followed suit to the island, accompanied by high-ranking military officials. When citizens started swarming the area in search for gold, The Netherlands sent more troops to safe guard the gold.

Prominent places where gold was found was in Daimari, Wacobana, Arikok, Rooi Fluit, Hadicouradi and later West punt, where gold ore was found. Because of a lack in advanced technology and materials to harvest the gold, the process took a more primitive approach: Clay rocks containing traces of gold were left to dry in the sun. Then, workers would start chipping the clay away on a large canvas to catch the gold particles that were left behind after the wind blew away the dust from the clay.

In the harvest period of 1824-1825, there was a total of 71,000 kilos collected through commissioned harvesting. Locals themselves reportedly found about 25 pounds worth of gold in the nearby rivers. The following years after that first big harvest, commission work fell off, and in 1828, the director of the goldmines, Johan Gravenhorst, decided to halt harvesting.

Almost 40 years later, the London-based Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. was granted concession. The firm built their gold mines on Bushiribana, and in the port of Oranjestad a long road that connected the gold mill to the port. The ores themselves came from Sero Plat en Sero Cristal.

By this point, workers were still using primitive methods to harvest the ores. For example, when someone had to go into the mines, there were no stairs or lifts; the person had to be brought down in a big bucket, with two or more workers holding the bucket by a thick rope above ground. Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. reportedly operated until 1899, and right after the Aruba Gold Concession Ltd. was established, coincidentally also based in London. This time, the gold mill in Balashi was built, and more mines were dug up all around the island. The gold ores that were found were transported via track engine, locally called the “trekinchi”. Despite being more equipped for the job, the Aruba Gold Concession Ltd. could not produce any real profit, and so the concession was terminated just eight years later, in 1908.

A local firm, the “Aruba Goud Maatschappij” (Aruba Gold Company) took over the concession, along with all the materials and equipment. In the beginning, the company saw good profit, and for a while, the island's economy depended primarily on the mining and harvesting of gold. But just like its predecessors, the streak of luck for the Aruba Gold Company came to an end when WWI broke out.

The main reason why production stopped this time was reportedly because of a lack in dynamite for extracting the ores from the mines, as well as a lack in raw materials like German cyanide for the refining process. By the time the war ended, the equipment that was left at Balashi were too old to use again. After the war, gold production on the Aruba was left to a standstill.

According to an issue in Aruba Esso News paper in 1953, Henny Eman wanted to start up digging again, this time using independent miners. He argued that there was proof of more gold to be discovered. Plus, hiring independent miners would boost the island's employment rate.

When it was proven that gold was in fact still present, the executive board on the island promised to fund the project only if the gold dug up proved to be valuable. However, nothing else was reported after this, so it could be concluded that there was no real profitable market on the island anymore.

The ruins of the Bushiribana and Balashi Gold Mills are still standing, and open for the public to visit. These structures offer a glance into the past, to a time where Aruba experienced one of its first wave of industrialization. Today, these structures are persevered as historical monuments. □

Source:

1. “De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over the geschiedenis van Aruba)” by Evert Bongers.
2. Aruba Esso News, 1953 issue.

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 40 Frisco

1 Light player

lunch 41 Passé

6 Hazard 42 Airport

11 Eat away areas

12 Kagan

of the

Supreme

Court

13 Distant

14 Colorful

flowers,

for short

15 Prepare

17 Buck's

mate

18 Early hour

19 Books

reviewer

22 German

article

23 Claire

of "Key

Largo"

24 Feudal

domains

25 Corn unit

27 Sixth

sense,

briefly

30 Layered

dish

31 Early auto

32 Little

rascal

33 Kicks off

35 Gold unit

38 Fuming

39 Chosen

few

DOWN

1 Neptune, e.g.

2 Francis

of TV

3 Riot

robber

4 Commo-

tions

5 Crushing,

say

6 Coat

rack

part

7 Wing

8 Entertain

at bedtime

H	A	S	P	S		P	A	S	T	A
E	T	H	E	L		A	C	H	E	S
N	E	A	T	O		D	R	A	N	K
		D	A	T	A		O	D	D	S
A	W	O	L		L	O	B	O		
L	O	W		F	A	R	A	W	A	Y
E	R	A	S	E		A	T	O	N	E
C	E	N	T	R	A	L		F	A	N
		D	E	N	T		A	N	T	S
B	A	B	E		M	A	L	I		
E	L	O	P	E		R	I	G	H	T
C	O	N	E	S		A	C	H	O	O
K	E	E	N	S		B	E	T	T	Y

Yesterday's answer

9 Like some

pools

10 Surgery

tool

16 Soup

containers

20 Dispiriting

21 Hosp.

hookups

24 Monk's

piece

25 Joe's

veep

26 Morale

27 Straying

28 Sofa

type

29 Tough

puzzles

30 Was

fond of

34 Diva's

piece

36 Eroded

37 Lasso

on TV

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11						12			
13						14			
15					16			17	
18				19		20	21		
22				23					
			24						
	25	26					27	28	29
30							31		
32					33		34		
35			36	37		38			
39						40			
41						42			

2-3

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-3 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

SKBZB FZB EPRH SAE VBFVEPV

— ACPSBZ FPN GFVBGFRR. —

GCRR MBBLX

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: I STILL BELIEVE THAT LOVE IS ALL YOU NEED. I DON'T KNOW A BETTER MESSAGE THAN THAT. — PAUL MCCARTNEY

Cruise ship Schedule: September 03 - 24 2024

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
TUE	03	ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS CARNIVAL HORIZON	08.00 09.00	20.00 22.00	B C	1 1
WED	04	RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	09.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	10	CELEBRITY BEYOND CARNIVAL CELEBRATION CARNIVAL VISTA	08.00 08.00 13.00	21.00 22.00 23.00	B C I	1 1 1
TUE	17	CARNIVAL HORIZON	08.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	24	CELEBRITY BEYOND CARNIVAL MAGIC	08.00 09.00	21.00 22.00	B C	1 1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basicbut important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

lets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Electrical power



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of out-

Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Safety



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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Products advertised as containing synthetically derived delta-8 THC are offered for sale at a smoke shop in north Seattle on Feb. 25, 2022.

Associated Press

What to know about delta-8 and other common vape shop drugs

By **DEVI SHASTRI**
AP Health Writer

They're sold in gas stations, vape shops, online and in other stores around the country in seemingly countless enticing forms: gummies, chocolate bars, chips. Their packaging lists things like delta-8 THC, micro- and macrodoses of "psychedelics" and "nootropics."

These substances are often sold through legal loopholes, despite concerns about potential health risks and a lack of oversight of how they're produced. And in the absence of federal rules, many states have banned or have tried to ban delta-8 THC.

Legal but under-regulated drugs are easy to come by, but experts say there are still a lot of uncertainties. Here's what to know.

How are these substances legal?

Drug laws are often specific to the substance, so federal and state regulators are left chasing the newest chemical concoction.

Delta-8 THC exploded in popularity under the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, more commonly known as the Farm Bill. Under that law, hemp products and the cannabinoids that could be made from them were classified as distinct from marijuana. □

Classifieds

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Divi Village Golf

Eagle Beach
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WK 52 Ocean View \$65,000
WK 7 and 14 - all views
GOLD SEASON
2 Bed Oceanfront \$18,000
2 Bed Oceanside \$14,000
2 Bed Ocean view \$12,500
2 Bed Garden view \$10,000
3 Bed Ocean view \$28,000

Marriott Aruba Ocean Club PLATINUM SEASON

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1 Bed Ocean front \$21,000
1 Bed Ocean View \$17,000
GOLD SEASON
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1 Bed Ocean View \$11,500

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San Nicolas:

Centro Medico: Tel. 584 5119

OTHER

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Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
Urgent Care 586 0448
Walk-In Doctor's Clinic
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EMERGENCY

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Oranjestad	527 3140
Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

TAXI SERVICES

Taxi Tas	587 5900
Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

TRAVEL INFO

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American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

AID FOUNDATIONS

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FAVI- Visually Impaired
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Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952
Narcotics Anonymous
Tel. 583 8989
Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400
Centre for Diabetes
Tel. 524 8888
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Party of one: Restaurants are catering to a growing number of solo diners

By DEE-ANN DURBIN and ANNE D'INNOCENZIO
AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Parisa Imanirad, a scientist and cancer researcher from San Francisco, is married and has a wide circle of friends. But once or twice a week, she goes to a restaurant by herself.

Imanirad said dining alone gives her time to think or read. She tries not to touch her phone and relishes the silence. "It's like a spa, but a different type," Imanirad said during a recent solo lunch at Spruce, an upscale restaurant in San Francisco.

Imanirad isn't alone in her desire to be alone. In the U.S., solo dining reservations have risen 29% over the last two years, according to OpenTable, the restaurant reservation site. They're up 18% this year in Germany and 14% in the United Kingdom.

Japan even has a special term for solo dining: "ohitorisama," which means "alone" but with honorifics spoken both before and after the word to make parties of one feel less hesitant. In a recent survey, Japan's Hot Pepper Gourmet Eating Out Research Institute found that 23% of Japanese people eat out alone, up from 18% in 2018.

As a result, many restaurants in Japan and elsewhere are redoing their seating, changing their menus and adding other special touches to appeal to solo diners.

"Even so-called family restaurants are increasing counter seats for solitary diners, and restaurants are offering courses with smaller servings so a person eating alone gets a variety of dishes," said Masahiro Inagaki, a senior researcher at the institute.

OpenTable CEO Debby Soo thinks remote work is one reason for the increase, with diners seeking respites from their home offices. But she thinks there are deeper reasons, too.

"I think there's a broader movement of self-love and self-care and really... en-



Parisa Imanirad, a scientist and cancer researcher, eats lunch alone at Spruce, an upscale restaurant in San Francisco, on Thursday, Aug. 22, 2024.

Associated Press

joying your own company," Soo said.

The pandemic also made social interactions less feasible and therefore less important while eating out, said Anna Mattila, a professor of lodging management at Penn State University who has studied solo dining.

And smartphones help some restaurant patrons feel connected to others even when they're by themselves, she said.

"The social norms have changed. People don't look at solo diners anymore and think, 'You must be a loner,'" Mattila said.

The growth comes as more people are living alone. In 2019, the Pew Research Center found that 38% of U.S. adults ages 25 to 54 were living without a partner, up from 29% in 1990. In Japan, single households now make up one-third of the total; that's expected to climb to 40% by 2040, according to government data.

Increasing interest in solo travel particularly among travelers ages 55 and over is also leading to more meals alone.

On a recent solo trip to Lu-

cerne, Switzerland, Carolyn Ray was stunned when the hostess led her to a beautiful lake-view table set for one, complete with a small vase of flowers.

Ray, the CEO and editor of JourneyWoman, a website for solo women travelers over 50, said other restaurants have tried to seat her toward the back or pointedly asked if someone will be joining her.

Ray counsels women planning to dine alone to go somewhere else if they're treated rudely or given a bad table.

"It's almost like the world hasn't caught up with this idea that we are on our own because we want to be on our own and we're independent and empowered," she said. "We can go into any restaurant we want and have a table for one and feel good about it."

Shawn Singh, a Houston-based content creator and restaurant reviewer, said he eats alone about 70% of the time.

If the idea of venturing out for a solitary meal is intimidating, he suggests going to lunch instead of dinner when tables are usually

more crowded with groups or going early on a weekday.

"The best way to see a restaurant you've been wanting to see for a long time is definitely going solo," Singh said.

"If I go at 5 p.m. and alone, I haven't been denied at one place ever."

Restaurants aren't always thrilled to seat a single diner at a table that could fit more.

A Michelin-starred London restaurant, Alex Dilling at Hotel Café Royal, caused a stir last year when it started charging solo patrons the same price as two customers. Its eight-course dinner tasting menu, which includes caviar and Cornish squid, costs 215 pounds (\$280) per person.

The restaurant, which has only 34 seats, didn't respond to a request for comment.

But its website doesn't allow reservations for less than two people.

Other restaurants say it's worth seating one person at a table made for two because solo diners tend to be loyal, repeat customers. "While there may be a short-term loss there, I think

we're kind of playing the long game and establishing ourselves as a place that's truly special," said Drew Brady, chief operating officer at Overthrow Hospitality, which operates 11 vegan restaurant concepts in New York.

Brady has seen an increase in solo diners since the pandemic, and says they're evenly split between men and women. At the company's flagship restaurant, Avant Garden, they make up as much as 8% of patrons.

In response, the restaurant teamed up with Light-speed, a restaurant tech and consulting company, to develop a solo dining program. Avant Garden now has a spacious table designed for solo diners, with a \$65 four-course menu fashioned like a passport to enhance the sense of adventure. If solo diners order a cocktail, a bartender mixes it tableside.

Mattila, at Penn State, said restaurants might want to consider additional changes.

Her research has found that solo diners prefer angular shapes in lights, tables or plates, for example to round ones, which are more associated with the connectedness of groups. They also prefer slow-tempo music.

Jill Weber, the founder of Sojourn Philly, a Philadelphia company that owns two restaurants and a wine bar, said she adds a communal table at special events like wine tastings so individuals have a place to gather.

She also doesn't offer specials designed for two. Weber, who is also an archaeologist, loves dining alone when she's traveling.

"There's something about not having to agree on where to go and everything that goes with that. You have the freedom to stay as long as you want, order what you want and sit with those things," she said.

"It also feels brave sometimes." □

Scottie Scheffler has a strong mind that will be put to the test as expectations rise: Analysis

By DOUG FERGUSON
AP Golf Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — Scottie Scheffler looked old even when he was young, so it was worth taking stock of his words when his final task of golf's greatest season in nearly two decades was complete.

"I feel like I've lived almost a full lifetime in this one year," he said after winning the FedEx Cup at East Lake. "It's been nuts."

Consider a timeline of images from the Year of Scottie. Scheffler sat on a chair behind the 14th tee as his trainer massaged his neck for pain that had him considering whether he should withdraw. He stuck it out, and two days later rallied from five behind to become the first player to win back-to-back at The Players Championship.

He slipped into the green jacket at Augusta National. He cradled his firstborn, Bennett, a few weeks later. He wore an orange jumpsuit in a Louisville, Kentucky, jail after a most peculiar arrest during a major championship. The Olympic gold medal was draped around his neck when he raised his arm to wipe tears during the national anthem. He raised the FedEx Cup trophy.

It's been nuts.

It also spoke to his most powerful asset that allowed him to win eight times, including that Olympic gold medal when he trailed by six shots on the back nine at Le Golf National in Paris.



Scottie Scheffler, seated, gets treatment as he waits to tee off on the 14th hole during the second

There was so much negativity about his putting, some of it justified, particularly on courses like Riviera and Pinehurst No. 2 where Scheffler simply couldn't see clearly. There is constant attention on the "Scheffler Shuffle," his feet sliding back and twisting on drives that quite often sail long and straight.

Not nearly enough attention is paid to his head.

"My goal to start the week was just to have the right attitude and use what I feel like is my best strength, and that's my mind," Scheffler said.

He was speaking about the Tour Championship, a four-day tournament that felt like it lasted longer because it was his third time playing as the No. 1 seed, and he slept on a lead that was at least four shots for the last three

rounds. Big leads are nice, but they're not easy.

It was like that all year, and it explains how he could take on so many big moments, whether it was facing a big deficit or a second-degree felony assault charge (later dismissed), whether it was newfound fame or a newborn son.

His caddie, Ted Scott, recalls Tom Kim coming up to him after the Olympics and asking, "How does Scottie stay so grounded with all that's going on?"

"It's a great testament to who he is," Scott said. "You could very quickly have the year he's had and act in a certain way. Scottie is ruthless. He'll put you in the ground. You wouldn't think he's nice if you were competing against him. But as soon as it's over, it's differ-

ent."

Scheffler needed all the mental strength he could muster early in the year, when he was coming up on a full year since his last PGA Tour victory and there was a constant conversation about his putting. There were whispers he wasn't really the No. 1 player in golf.

Scheffler doesn't spend time reading and he tries not to listen. But it's hard to ignore. "Blocking out noise? That doesn't exist," Scheffler said in March before going to Bay Hill, the start of his astonishing run. "Your brain can't shut off. You have to focus on something else. You can't not think negative. You have to force your brain into thinking about something else." That works both ways ignoring the criticism and the platitudes, especially the lat-

ter because he has won so much.

His mental strength will need to be stronger than ever going forward. Scheffler has the Presidents Cup in two weeks, a title to defend in the Bahamas at the Hero World Challenge after Thanksgiving and then it's on to 2025.

Expectations will be higher than ever, especially with so many comparisons to Tiger Woods.

Woods had no equal during his peak years. He was compared only with the past, Jack Nicklaus and Ben Hogan, Byron Nelson and Sam Snead, not anyone who competed against him. And so it can be unsettling to hear Scheffler being mentioned in the same context.

He is the first player since Woods to win seven times on the PGA Tour in one season (Woods did that four times). Scheffler needed only 931 days from his first win in the Phoenix Open in 2022 to No. 13, a shorter time than it took Woods to go from his first to his 13th. Woods, of course, won his in his fifth start as a pro and spent 18 months overhauling his swing.

Scheffler's lead in the world ranking is unlike anything seen since Woods in his prime.

Scheffler led the PGA Tour money list at just over \$29.2 million this year, with another \$33 million in bonus money. But it was Woods and the frenzy he created that made prize money go up in the first place. □

Oilers sign Leon Draisaitl to an 8-year extension worth \$112 million

EDMONTON, Alberta (AP) —

The Edmonton Oilers have signed Leon Draisaitl to an eight-year contract extension worth \$112 million, a deal that gives the German star the highest salary cap hit in NHL history at \$14 million.

The new contract begins with the 2025-26 season and runs through 2033. General manager Stan Bowman announced the extension Tuesday. "This is a historic day for the Edmonton Oilers," Bow-

man said. "Leon's commitment to our team, our city and Oilers fans everywhere cannot be overstated. His desire to help bring a Stanley Cup title home to Edmonton is central to everything he does both on and off the ice."

Draisaitl and Connor McDavid helped the team reach Game 7 of the Stanley Cup final this past year. Draisaitl, the league's MVP in 2020, was set to be an unrestricted free agent next summer.

Draisaitl surpasses Auston Matthews' \$13.25 million cap hit with this new contract, which nearly doubles his salary. The 28-year-old Draisaitl is making \$8.5 million on average on his current contract, which was signed in 2017 and became one of the most team friendly in the league. The big forward from Cologne has been worth every penny, putting up 850 points in 719 regular-season games since making his NHL debut and being one of the



Edmonton Oilers center Leon Draisaitl (29) skates on the ice during the third period of Game 7 of the NHL hockey Stanley Cup Final against the Florida Panthers, June 24, 2024, in Sunrise, Fla.

Associated Press

top producers in playoff history with 108 in 74. Draisaitl's 1.46 points a game rank fourth all time among players with 40-

plus games in the postseason behind Hall of Famers Wayne Gretzky and Mario Lemieux and McDavid. □

The NFL season begins this week. Here's a look at some of the big games and rules changes

By **DAVID BRANDT**
AP Sports Writer

The NFL season begins on Thursday night when the two-time defending Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs host the Baltimore Ravens.

Here are a couple of big storylines as the games that count in the standings rapidly approach:

When does the NFL season start?

The Chiefs-Ravens game kicks the season off on a Thursday night and then the Philadelphia Eagles and Green Bay Packers meet in Sao Paulo on Friday night for the first regular season game played in Brazil. It's the first time since 1970 that the NFL has had a Friday night game as part of its opening week schedule.

Most of the Week 1 games will be on Sunday, Sept. 8, followed by the season's first Monday night matchup between the New York Jets and San Francisco 49ers. Important early games on



New England Patriots quarterback Jacoby Brissett passes against the Washington Commanders during the first half of a preseason NFL football game, Sunday, Aug. 25, 2024, in Landover, Md.
Associated Press

the schedule

Sept. 8, Rams at Lions: The game features the quarterback matchup of Jared Goff vs. Matthew Stafford. Stafford was the longtime QB for the Lions before getting traded to the Rams for

Goff and then leading L.A. to a Super Bowl title in 2022. Goff led the Lions past the Rams in the playoffs last season. Both QBs performed well in last year's playoff matchup and more fireworks are expected in

Week 1.

Sept. 9, Jets at 49ers: This should mark the return of New York quarterback Aaron Rodgers, who lasted just three official snaps last year before an Achilles injury cut his 2023 season

short. The four-time MVP will face a tough test against a 49ers defense that's been among the league's best for the past few seasons.

Sept. 15, Bears at Texans: If all goes well, this should be the second NFL game for rookie quarterback Caleb Williams, who was taken by the Bears with the No. 1-overall pick out of USC. Williams gets a Week 2 matchup against Texans QB C.J. Stroud, who was the AP's Offensive Rookie of the Year in 2023.

Nov. 25, Ravens at Chargers: This one is later in the schedule, but features a coaching matchup between brothers John and Jim Harbaugh. Jim was hired by the Chargers in the offseason after leading Michigan to a national championship. The action on the field should be good as well. Baltimore's Lamar Jackson and L.A.'s Justin Herbert are two of the league's top quarterbacks. □

Emma Navarro reaches her first major semifinal, beats Paula Badosa at the US Open

By **BRIAN MAHONEY**
AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Emma Navarro rode a stunning turnaround right into her first Grand Slam semifinal, beating Paula Badosa 6-2, 7-5 at the U.S. Open on Tuesday to follow up her upset of defending champion Coco Gauff.

Trailing 5-1 in the second set and three points from having to go to a deciding third, Navarro won the next four points to stay alive, starting a stretch in which she captured 24 of the final 28 points of the match.

"I think things weren't looking great there in the second set, but just tried to be really tough, stick in there, make her hit one more ball," Navarro said. "I felt like if I could scrap out a few longer points, maybe put some pressure on her, I felt like I could come back and maybe close it out in two sets.

"Happy with how I was able to do that."

Navarro, the No. 13-seeded American who had never even won a match in the main draw of her home major before this year, advanced to face No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka or seventh-seeded Zheng Qinwen in

Thursday's semis.

The 23-year-old Navarro, who ousted the No. 3-seeded Gauff on Sunday in the fourth round, ran through the first set in 29 minutes before the No. 26-seeded Badosa opened a 5-1 lead in the second.

But when Navarro broke

the Spaniard in the next game, the player who leads the WTA Tour with 18 wins in three sets had a feeling she might not need to play a third.

"I felt like, even though she was up 5-1, 5-2 after that game, I felt like she wasn't totally confident in her ability to close out that set," Navarro said. "So I felt like if I could push back a little bit and make her think a little bit on her service game, maybe I could sneak my way back in there."

She did, taking six straight games with some help from Badosa, who said she was a "disaster" while dealing with the pressure of trying to reach her first Grand Slam semifinal.

"I never had the momentum in this match. I played four or five games OK. It was 5-1, but I never felt myself on the court," Badosa said.

"I lost, I don't know, 20

points almost in a row. It's very weird for me because I'm quite a consistent player, so I wasn't expecting that either."

Two other Americans were hoping to earn semifinal spots on Tuesday. No. 12 seed Taylor Fritz followed Navarro onto the court at Arthur Ashe Stadium against No. 4 Alexander Zverev, the 2020 U.S. Open runner-up, with No. 20 Frances Tiafoe facing No. 9 Grigor Dimitrov at night. Navarro also beat Gauff in the fourth round at Wimbledon before losing to eventual runner-up Jasmine Paolini in the next round, a 6-2, 6-1 rout in less than an hour.

But the 2021 NCAA singles champion at Virginia was ready for this matchup between New York natives, jumping on Badosa to win the first three games, then seizing the opening Badosa gave her late. □



Emma Navarro, of the United States, returns a shot to Paula Badosa, of Spain, during the quarterfinals of the U.S. Open tennis championships, Tuesday, Sept. 3, 2024, in New York.

Associated Press